

The Tennessee Tribune

Volume 23, No. 20, 3 Sections

THURSDAY, May 17-23, 2012

\$1.00

New Birth and Old Behavior: The Challenge of Christian Commitment

A Commentary by Jason Curry



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Approximately twenty years ago, I had a good friend who had a problem making a commitment. He was interested in marrying a young lady, and they dated for several years. Eventually, she inquired about an engagement ring; however, he was reluctant to express his commitment to her by asking for her hand in marriage. Instead, he decided to take a break from the relationship and explore a career opportunity for a few months. Unfortunately, when he returned, he learned that she was engaged to someone else. My friend understood and benefitted from the value of a healthy, Christian relationship; however, his unwillingness to make a firm commitment toward marriage affected his outlook for many years. Occasionally, my Chapel Assistants ask me why I decided to become married at the age of twenty-three to a woman who was only twenty-one. I simply tell them that I had to make a firm commitment at a young age be-

cause I didn't want my blessing to pass me by.

The Christian message has challenged humanity to make firm a commitment for the past two-thousand years. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the words of Jesus continue to encourage people to make a commitment to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37, 39)." The women at the tomb accepted this Christian commitment by spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:5-8). St. Augustine accepted this Christian commitment by disengaging in worldly relationships and writing a famous book called *The Confessions*. The monks during the Middle Ages accepted this Christian commitment by copying all sixty-six books of the bible by hand. Rosa Parks accepted this Christian commitment by standing for Justice so that African-

Americans would receive their civil rights. Many Christians have "temporarily" accepted the challenge of loving God and their neighbors. However, many more Christians have embraced a longstanding commitment to loving God and their neighbors in spite of the ups and down, the triumphs and tragedies, the victories and vicissitudes that life is sure to bring.

Many parishioners, pastors and parishes insist on conversion, but fail to emphasize commitment. The problems of life constantly invite us to reconsider the behavior of the "old creature" (e.g., lying, hating, coveting, and refusing to forgive – see 2 Corinthians 5:17); however, being born again (John 3:1-8) enables us to look beyond the problems of the present day, and embrace the possibilities of a hopeful tomorrow. The winds of change blow in many different directions, but let us hold fast to our commitment to Christ, so that one day we may exchange our cross for a crown.